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A whimsical illustration of four mice watching a prince and princess in a forest. The mice are dressed in colorful clothing and holding flowers. The prince and princess are standing under a green canopy, with a castle visible in the background.

## Disney's "Cinderella": Of Mice and Girls

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# Newsweek

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The Magazine of News Significance

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## For Your Information

**DEAR HEARTS AND GENEROUS PEOPLE:** A paraphrase of the current song hit comes to mind when one reads the latest mortality figures on heart disease. It takes a greater toll in this country than the next five leading causes of death combined. American Heart Week begins Monday, Feb. 13, which includes Valentine's Day, but the campaign conducted by the American Heart Association runs through the rest of this month. Your local affiliated association undoubtedly has called attention to the current drive for \$6,000,000, of which 70 per cent is distributed regionally. The remainder goes to the national association for research, education, and integrating cardiac programs. We hope that NEWSWEEK readers will consider the current goal a financial challenge, which they will meet as they have in the past.

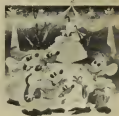


**STRAWS IN THE WIND:** Columnists and commentators alike have been quick to claim credit for first revealing the H or super-atomic bomb to their public. We find none of those claims dated ahead of the Periscope box in NEWSWEEK's Nov. 21 issue (on the stands Nov. 17) which stated in part: "... Russia, like the U.S., now is theoretically capable of making a bomb 75 to 100 times as destructive as the one dropped on Hiroshima."

► In the same field, Periscope announced last August that a new element, 97, which does not occur in nature and is highly radioactive, had been produced in the University of California cyclotron. At that time, it was vehemently denied by university officials. Readers of NEWSWEEK's Science story in the Jan. 30 issue know, of course, that the Periscope item has been confirmed with announcement "of the largest atom yet made by man or nature"—berkelium, or Element 97.

**DON'T MISS:** The analysis, based on confidential reports, of current and complex deals between the Kremlin and the Chinese Communists on page 27... The diagnosis of American railroad ailments on page 56. It's another NEWSWEEK Special Report... The saga of Britain's 'O'lday King who has parlayed the pursuit of 'apinness into about £5,500,000 sterling and who is 'ustling American dollars (page 66)... The Religion department Baedeker describing all roads to Rome in this Holy Year on page 74... The account of the amazing success achieved by publishers of books on horses for children on page 92.

**THE COVER:** For the first time in eight years, Walt Disney has gone back to all-cartoon animation in his latest RKO release, "Cinderella." He's also gone back to the animal which made him famous—although it isn't Mickey (always referred to as The Mouse around Disney's studios). Cinderella's co-stars are some of "the bravest and most resourceful" and "funniest mice anybody has ever seen. According to NEWSWEEK's Movie department, the heroine is the most human, in characterization and animation, to appear in any of Disney's cartooned fairy tales. The story behind Cinderella and her mice, beginning on page 84, marks the first cover research and reporting assignment for Leonard Slater since his arrival in Hollywood as NEWSWEEK bureau chief.



The Editors

## Money From Mice

The biggest and best news in the American movie industry, appropriately at hand by this Valentine's Day, was that it looked as though Walt Disney had another hit on his hands. Hollywood, where financial candor is often supposed to be as rare as charity, guessed that Walt could use a hit. (Was the Bank of America, his longtime creditor, after all these years still into him for \$600,000?) But there could scarcely be much guessing on the part of the reviewers as to the merit of Disney's sixteenth full-length film, "Cinderella" (see cover). "Cinderella" was in.

Once again the man who had probably given more theatrical joy to more people than any other living human had reverted to his formula of filming a story of mice and girls, and had produced pure delight. Not since "Snow White" or "Dumbo" was Disney potentially riding so esthetically or financially high.

"Nineteen-fifty," affirmed the Disney organization, "is the Cinderella year." Everybody who had gotten an admission's worth of fun out of a Disney show must have hoped so. For a good many years in the past two decades things have not been too satisfactory for Disney.

**The Troubles:** Those beloved and universal rodents, Mickey and Minnie Mouse (who go so far back in the history of the modern screen that Mickey was once permitted to do quite a funny bit of business with a chamber pot), seem to have done very well for their creator. moneywise, until the pall of the double bill settled over the movie business. Even black and white cartoon animations cost a whale of a lot of money (every frame has to be hand drawn), and exhibitors stuck at paying rentals commensurate



Disney (right) talks shop with a few of his 750 artists

with what it took to put them out, no matter how clever and amusing Disney's might be.

"Snow White," the first of Disney's stories of fairyland and girls and the first full-length Disney production, appeared to have solved that fiscal problem. It could scarcely have been paid a more sweeping compliment from the nation when Westbrook Pegler publicly stated that it was the best thing that happened in 1938. The mean old queen was universally despised; the dwarfs and woodland creatures (who never inhabited any woodland on this somber earth) were universally adored; "Someday My Prince Will Come" and "Whistle While You

Work" shortened the life of many a radio tube.

Then came more troubles. Once in a while there creeps out a queer, perhaps even wholesomely childish, propensity for vulgar horror in a Disney film: the bloody battle of the dinosaurs in "Fantasia"; the grotesque sequences of "Pinocchio" on Pleasure Island and inside the whale. For that or some other reason those films did not go so well. Nor did such amalgamations of live and animated characters as seen in "Saludos Amigos" or "Song of the South"—although there was rich stuff for Disney fans in them all.

"Dumbo," tender elephantine love story of the circus that it was, alone kept



The wicked stepmother and her two daughters are no match for Cinderella and her mouse friends



Disney banner high in these years. significantly, there was a very kind, worldlywise ringmaster in this picture and he was a mouse.

"Cinderella" provides the winning Disparlay: a fairy-story girl and not a se but mice, lots of mice, keening women mice who dress her in the ht of style so that she may go to ball her wicked stepmother and steps-ers have tried to bar her from; men s, the bravest and most resourceful e anybody ever saw; funny mice, k-witted but courageous, too.

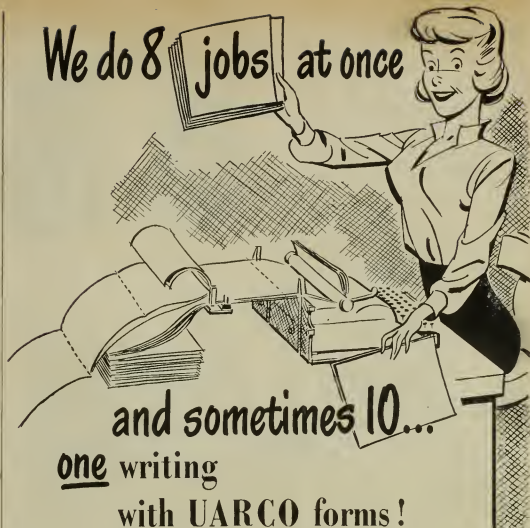
**Common Denominator:** It took e Davis, one of Disney's top "direct-animators," and his crew of assistants months to arrive at an acceptable sonification of Cinderella. Snow White a brunette. Cinderella is blond and, y possibly, "the common denominator all fairy-story princesses." The screen- y follows the general pattern of the nch fantasy that Charles Perrault chronicled some 300 years ago, but h welcome additions. There is a npy, broadly comic fairy godmother ose magic wand is a little uncontrol- le at first but who gets the pumpkin eh there just the same with a jaunty o entitled "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo."

Altogether "Cinderella" is a delightful ousel of humor, fantasy, and song, "bbidi" has been on Your Hit Parade d should be followed shortly by "A eam Is a Wish Your Heart Makes" "So This Is Love." The Technicolor otography is gorgeous, and the ani- tion and the ingenious camera work e finest Disney has ever achieved. The o's charm, however, rests securely in e joyous zooful of furred and feathered atures that share Cinderella's lonely ret in the family chateau.

The other notable innovation to the e is Lucifer, a fat and unutterably smug e use cat whom Disney has dreamed up a wonderful villain to set against the ident mice. But in Gus, the mouse mmando, and his pawky pal Jaq, Dis- y has a pair of heroes the like of hich has not been seen since the reign Mickey. Most memorable scene of the hole movie is the breathless climax in hich Gus and Jaq filch a monumental y from the stepmother's pocket and tug d puff and hoist it up the tower stairs e room in which Cinderella has been iden from the prince's heralds.

The promotion has been heads up too. the film was being readied for general ease, merchants throughout the nation n appropriate slipper in hand—have en organizing searches for various Cin- derellas-for-a-day with prizes for her om the slipper fit. In addition to the 0 North American manufacturers who e Disney characters on or as their prod- ts, several dozen more have been lis- ed to use Cinderella's face and signa-

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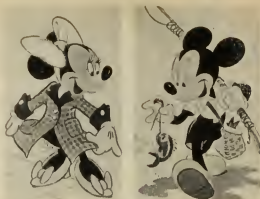
ture on merchandise ranging from balloons and bath salts to shoes, jewelry, dresses, ice-cream desserts, and, improbably, pencil sharpeners.

**Mouse Man:** Like so many cartoonists, Walt Disney looks not unlike his most celebrated creation, a knowing and all-charitable mouse. He has the long sensitive nose for it, likewise the mustache (a little gray, nowadays). In fact, as a cartoonist Disney has always been fascinated by the bright eyes and scurrying movements of mice. Back in 1920 while he was putting around with his first animated cartooning in a Kansas City garage, he used to catch and use them as models. The cartoons Disney turned out for a local advertising concern in his garage days earned him about \$35 a week.

Disney first got the idea of animating the mouse Mickey while riding a California-bound train in the late '20s. His fairy tales such as "Alice in Cartoonland" hadn't set the movie industry on fire. His soundless, black and white adventures of "Oswald the Rabbit" had earned their modest keep, but hadn't sparked either his or the public's imagination.

By 1930 Mickey Mouse had become as international as chewing gum. From Mexico, where he became known as *Miguel Ratoncito*, to Italy, which called him *Topolino*, and even in Japan, where slant-eyed youngsters talked about "*Miki Kuchi*," he became as popular in children's eyes as the local equivalent of Santa Claus. When the second world war began, countless fighter planes and bombers took to the blue yonder with Mickey's likeness (or those of other of the Disney menagerie) painted on their sides. (His outfit would design one for anybody who asked, gratis of course.) Ultimate military honors came to the wonderful rodent on June 6, 1944, when "Mickey Mouse" was made an official password for D Day.

Openheartedness is not the least of



Headed by Minnie and Mickey . . .

Disney's characteristics. To put out a feature-length cartoon film like "Cinderella," the Disney studios require the services of at least 750 artists who may discard more than a million drawings before their finished job (nineteen final celluloid drawings per film foot) is complete. At least twice that number of employees are required to handle three-dimensional backgrounds, research, camera work, and administrative details. The credit list at the opening of a Disney film is almost laughable for the number of people he tries to get in on it.

**'Serious':** "This medium can be serious as hell" is a point Mickey Mouse's creator likes to make. And the wartime record of Disney Productions, Inc., bears him out. "Victory Through Air Power" was probably his most publicized contribution to the second world war. But ex-fliers will remember the countless training films he turned out on the subject of do's and don'ts for embryo pilots. "We also did the whole workings of a torpedo," he points out. "A fascinating thing. And five hours of film on the [Norden] bomb-sight." Equally memorable, and perhaps as valuable in a lighter vein, was his Donald Duck parody on the Nazi regime, "Der Führer's Face" (1943).

At 48, Disney, as a hitherto unheard-of

concession to the art of relaxation, begun to learn badminton and take his spare time with model trains. But dynamic energy of a man who, just at singlehandedly, boosted the animated cartoon to a major art form is still there.

Nostalgically he looks back on the days when he and his brother had to photograph their animations from the top of a packing box in a rented room. "We had to walk about a mile before we reached the bathroom," he remembers, "but had a grand time in those days." He nonetheless prides himself on having become of Hollywood's biggest independent producers.

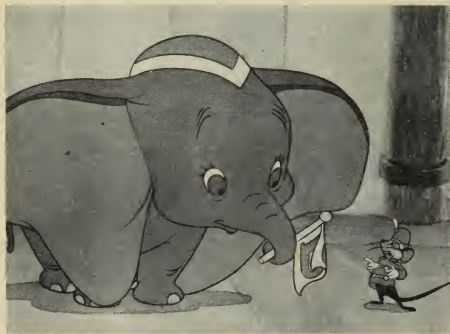
"For a long time," he says, "I have been trying to build an organization. After years I have it. Now it's a matter of running it. In the old days I did everything—story, animating, cutting, even developing sometimes . . . Now it becomes a process of feeding the organization. They're ready to turn it out if you get them the stuff."

But he hasn't changed much since the days when he first graduated from Chicago newspaper route to the insect business of free-lance drawing. "Cinderella" provides ample evidence that artistic sensibilities have survived a scathed both the war and the often more lethal effects of Hollywood success.

In fact, some time ago, taking an Eastern couple on one of his generous tours of the neat red-brick studios at Burbank, he showed a little streak of amusement at the subject of the latter temptation. Pointing to an iron manhole cover with the initials W.D. on its waffled surface, "that's really what I call fame," he said.

## Other Film

**The Third Man** (Alexander Korda and David O. Selznick) is another near-perfect melodrama from the producers and



. . . the Disney family tree includes Dumbo (with another mouse) and Snow White (with dwarfs)